

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MOSCOW 12347 051447Z

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-07 L-03 SP-02 INR-07 SS-15 EURE-00

/047 W

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P R 051304Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7215

INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 12347

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UR, US, CSCE

SUBJECT: RENTAL OF CARS BY SOVIETS IN UNITED STATES

REF.: A) STATE 185345, B) LENINGRAD 1228

1. INTOURIST BROCHURE DISTRIBUTED IN MOSCOW HOTELS ADVERTISES SELF-
DRIVE RENTAL CARS AVAILABLE IN 38 SOVIET CITIES WEST OF URALS TO
FOREIGNERS PAYING HARD CURRENCY. GREAT MAJORITY OF SHORT-TERM
BUSINESS VISITORS RELY SOLELY ON CHAUFFERED CARS INCLUDED IN
STANDARD INTOURIST BUSINESS TOUR PACKAGE, BUT WE DO KNOW
OF BUSINESSMEN WHO HAVE RENTED CARS WITHOUT DIFFICULTY IN
MOSCOW AND LENINGRAD. THE RELATIVELY FEW SHORT-TERM BUSINESS
VISITORS TRAVELLING TO OTHER CITIES ARE USUALLY GUESTS OF
SOME SOVIET ORGANIZATION WHICH PUTS CHAUFFERED CARS AT THEIR
DISPOSAL. WE DO NOT KNOW OF ANY BUSINESSMAN WHO HAS ATTEMPTED
TO RENT A CAR OUTSIDE MOSCOW OR LENINGRAD, BUT IN SEVERAL CASES
EMBOFFS TRYING TO RENT SELF-DRIVE CARS IN OTHER CITIES
HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT NONE WERE AVAILABLE. THIS COULD CONFIRM
SOVIET TACTIC ALLUDED TO IN LENINGRAD'S REFTTEL, NAMELY
THAT SOVIETS MAY DELIBERATELY RESTRICT OR PROHIBIT RENTAL OF
SELF-DRIVE CARS IN MANY CITIES BY LIMITING NUMBER WHICH
CAN BE RENTED. OVER NEXT SEVERAL MONTHS WE SHALL TRY TO CONFIRM
THIS BY HAVING EMBASSY OFFICERS ATTEMPT TO RENT SELF-DRIVE CARS
DURING TRAVEL TO CITIES WHERE SUCH SERVICE IS LISTED AS BEING
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AVAILABLE FOR FOREIGNERS.

2. LONGER-TERM BUSINESS REPRESENTATIVES ARE ASSIGNED EITHER TO OFFICES OF ACCREDITED U.S. COMPANIES IN MOSCOW, WHERE THEY ORDINARILY BUY THEIR OWN CARS, OR TO PROJECT SITES IN SMALLER CITIES, WHERE INTOURIST RENT-A -CAR SERVICE DOES NOT EXIST. IN LATTER CASE, SOVIETS HAVE BEEN GENERALLY COOPERATIVE IN PROVIDING CHAUFFERED CARS FOR COMMUTING AND FREE-TIME EXCURSIONS.

3. ON BASIS OF ABOVE, WE BELIEVE THAT ANY AGREEMENT BETWEEN US AND USSR ON RENTAL OF SELF-DRIVE CARS FOR TOURISTS AND COMMERCIAL VISITORS WILL HAVE TO BE VERY CAREFULLY WORKED OUT IF IT IS TO BE TRULLY RECIPROCAL AND GENUINELY USEFUL FOR US BUSINESSMEN. MERE STATEMENT BY INTOURIST THAT SELF-DRIVE CARS CAN BE RENTED IN A LARGE NUMBER OF SOVIET CITIES IS OBVIOUSLY INADEQUATE AND AGREE-MENT WOULD HAVE TO INCLUDE GUARANTEES ON MINIMUM NUMBERS OF CARS MAINTAINED AND MADE AVAILABLE FOR RENTAL. WE ALSO CONCUR WITH AMCONSUL LENINGRAD THAT AGREEMENT WOULD HAVE TO DEAL WITH BROADER AND MORE COMPLICATED SUBJECT OF TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS. STOESEL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LEASES, AUTOMOBILES, VISITS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 AUG 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MartinML
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976MOSCOW12347
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760302-0201
From: MOSCOW
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760881/aaaactgn.tel
Line Count: 80
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: STADIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: STADIS
Reference: 76 STATE 185345, 76 LENINGRAD 1228
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MartinML
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07 MAY 2004 by ElyME>; APPROVED <01 SEP 2004 by MartinML>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RENTAL OF CARS BY SOVIETS IN UNITED STATES
TAGS: PFOR, UR, US, CSCE
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006